

**HEARTS AND MINDS....** Abu Makr Naji's *The Management of Savagery:*  
Themes from *The Art of War*, *On War*, and *What Is To Be Done*

*The Management of Savagery*, published in 2004 (referred to hereafter as *MOS*) is the treatise for the creation of global Caliphate, and is particularly venerated by the Islamic State. *MOS* integrates many themes from several classic works in world literature which address aspects of revolutionary transformation, politics, nation-building and the nature and use of force. The influence of Chinese historian Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (*AOW*, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) is evident in the program set forth by *MOS*, as is Von Clausewitz's *On War* (1832) and Machiavelli's observations on leadership. *MOS* also draws upon Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* The Islamic State document *Strategic Plan for Reinforcing the Political Position Of The Islamic State of Iraq*, (2009) extends *MOS*, and further lays out policies and recommendations for Islamic State leaders. In this paper we will look at each of these tributary streams into *MOS*, and make a general assessment of its current/future influence.

*AOW* is a timeless exposition on tenets of warfare, in particular how to defeat an enemy of superior force. Essentially the strategy advanced is for the defender (and in particular, the militarily weaker force) to keep the more powerful aggressor off balance, sap their energy and confidence bit by bit, and inflict casualties without engaging unnecessarily in any set piece battles (in which the weaker defense is inherently at a disadvantage). Eventually political support amongst the intruder's home population and political leadership will exhaust, and at that point the aggressor will call it a day and disengage. There have been countless examples through history of these principles in action with the foretold results; the first which readily comes to mind is the annihilation of three Roman legions by a coalition of Germanic tribes at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest in 5 CE, which was the high water mark of Roman expansion into Germany (retreat from that point forward).

Clausewitz's *On War* has many contributing feeders to *MOS* and we can see Clausewitz's insights cooked into *MOS*. Specifically, we see in *MOS* the eternal trinity of war from Clausewitz – 1) abject (and sometimes total/unrestrained) violence, 2) “fog of war”/uncertainty and 3) the role of decisive policy and reason. North Vietnamese General Giap and revolutionary Prime Minister Ho Chi Minh brilliantly implemented the strategies in *AOW* – *but also extended and advanced* it to include not only military, but political, economic, and political dimensions as extensions to Sun Tzu's work; and that may have been influenced by their read of Von Clausewitz. *On War* and its lessons apparently resonated with Giap and Ho Chi Minh because it described the Napoleonic Wars' theme of ‘total war’; and they wove this theme into the fabric of the North Vietnamese revolutionary resistance. Giap and Ho Chi Minh – employing Sun Tzu's *AOW* and *On War* as their framework, sent the more powerful, Western capitalist imperialist interventionist intruders (namely, France and the United States) packing. The American War (what we call the Vietnam war...) was a war of the people, by the people, and for the people. The people self-actualized with the goals of the war, namely independence, unification and ejection of foreign presence from their soil. Service was not just “in the army”, but rather in “The People's Army”. Not firepower or airpower, but People Power - the People - together in solidarity, spiritually united, asserting their autonomy and human, inalienable rights.

In *MOS* we see elements of *AOW* (written 2,500 years ago) and *On War* (1832). We also see themes from Lenin's book *What Is To Be Done* (*WITBD*) (published 1902) in *MOS*. *WITBD* is a call-to-action for a structured, aggressive revolutionary campaign. In the context of Tsarist Russia, the true believers in Marxism would have two missions: 1) to preserve the purity of Marxist ideology, protecting it from corruption or dilution by outside influencers and 2) to create a SWAT team (or ‘vanguard’) to get out there amongst the people, mix it up with the proletariat, educate them, instill in them a passion for the purest Marxist ideology and galvanize candidates to action to help bring about positive social change (by toppling the regime, mercilessly if necessary). Tsarist Russia's proletariat is unhappy, disorganized and unorganized; they are ignorant of how to effect the changes in working conditions and wages they seek, but Lenin sees them as ripe to bring about socialist change *if lead by committed*,

*enlightened leadership.* The proletariat's random bellyaching about "Rich Off Our Back" was insufficient in and of itself, and would never achieve progress towards redistribution of wealth and power. The achievement of the end goal of a stateless, class-free, benevolent, shared-ownership of the means of production, and ultimately... "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" *must be hastened by activist revolution!*

Naji's *The Management of Savagery* incorporates and integrates these themes in a fiery call to action for committed jihadists, taking a page from Lenin's playbook, *What Is To Be Done*. There are similarities between Lenin's end state (stateless, class-free, benevolent, shared-ownership of the means of production) and Naji's (the Islamic State's) end goal of a global caliphate, where nation-states are irrelevant, and economic conditions are not on the radar except to ensure that all have what they need and everyone is on the path to 'divine guidance and salvation'. Giap and Ho Chi Minh's ejection of neo-colonialist Western Christian capitalist invaders gives purchase and inspiration to Naji who celebrates this in *MOS* and strives for the same ejection. As in *WITBD*, Naji differentiates between Islam's true believers on the one hand, and the usurpers and Muslim revisionist trespassers (e.g. Sawah Salafists) on the other. Naji also prescribes a program of ideological purity and reeducation – with the logical extension to that being extermination of everyone obstructing the true path. In fact, the text has an entire chapter on this endeavor of 'education' entitled '*Mastering Education within the Movement Just as It Was in the First Age of Islam*'.

Mercy is in short supply in the text of *MOS*. Clausewitz's conception of *total war* with no mercy sought or given - in which the entire society is dedicated to the struggle - is described and advocated. (*On War* was written in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars which was a modern-world implementation of 'total war'; every town and village was part of it to greater or lesser degree). The tactic of distracting the armed forces of a target country with feint incursions while rendering the major attack in another area, and overwhelming the area being attacked is straight from Sun Tzu. (It is a variation on Muhammad Ali's 'rope-a-dope' tactic... take some hits, let the enemy expend energy and weaken, then hit back hard where they are weak - and avoid engaging when/where they are strong...) Create chaos, take over the targeted region with a proto-state, ensure the basic necessities of life are available to the people (which any government is responsible for), and establish/enforce strict Shari'a. As in orthodox socialism in its end-state, the nation-state is an irrelevant conception. *MOS* does not direct that the state be overthrown first before garnering the people into the fold, but rather that the insurgent attacks and initiative be gained outside of the conception of 'the state', and in the unlit spaces away from the state's protective apparatus; frequently in practice this would be in the areas *around* the cities and *not in* the cities, or in the outlying suburbs or in Islamic hot spot neighborhoods. Attacking tourist attractions (and the tourists themselves) and foreign national political or economic infrastructure is a valid and productive undertaking because this would draw in security forces, starving *other* areas of protection – which is then precisely where The Islamic State will next strike to gain territory, gain political momentum and undermine the confidence and perceived value of the state.

*Naji means business: "The increase in savagery which may result from failure, is not the worst thing that can happen now or in the previous decade (the nineties) and those before it. Rather, the most abominable of the levels of savagery is (still) less than stability under the order of unbelief by (several) degrees."* (read that as... "give me liberty or give me death"- Patrick Henry) (Or '*By Oppression's woes and pain! By your sons in servile chains! We will drain our dearest veins, BUT WE SHALL BE FREE*' -Scottish poet Robert Burns in *Scots Wa Hae* on the eve of Battle Of Bannockburn against England's King Edward). The section which discusses unrestrained violence as a prerequisite handily skirts the scripture's prohibitions against such violence; Naji posits that only extreme violence will secure the target population; terrorize it to stay Shari'a-compliant and observant; and the use of extreme violence will intimidate foreign imperialists who do not wish to engage (and who do not wish to commit any "boots on the ground").<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "If the number of Americans killed is one tenth of the number of Russians killed in Afghanistan and Chechnya, they will flee, heedless of all else. That is because the current structure of the American and Western military is not the same as the structure of their military in the era of colonialism. They reached a stage of effeminacy which made them unable to sustain battles for a long period of time and they compensate for this with a deceptive halo."

The stinging criticism of the United States – that we shall fall because we believe our own media and message as to our manifest destiny to be a force for human good -- is a kind of intellectual martial art in which our own power is used against us. Two quotes were striking in the text: *“It is just as the American author Paul Kennedy says: ‘If America expands the use of its military power and strategically extends more than necessary, this will lead to its downfall’; (and straight out of Sun Tzu :) This overwhelming power is also assisted by the cohesion of the society in the central country and the cohesion of that society’s institutions and sectors. The overwhelming military power (weapons, technology, fighters) has no value without the cohesion of society and the cohesion of (society’s) institutions and sectors. But this overwhelming military power may become a curse to this great superpower if the cohesion of society [literally “the social entity”] collapses.* Thus we see the author’s recipe for using “our” imperialist overexpansion as a weapon against us, allowing us to over-expand, then hitting our proxies at the least defended area, forcing America’s retreat from the region, and thus creating and exploiting a power vacuum and installing the proto Islamic state. Naji also talks about how American military involvement in the Levant creates a dynamic of hatred of America amongst the youth of the region, who are thereby impelled to join The Islamic State.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion in the text about the dismantling of the Soviet Union being a result of ‘cultural annihilation’ resulting from the Soviet military defeat in Afghanistan was convincing, and shows the author is aware of current tides of history. The author spoke of the igniting of Muslim activism in the Soviet Muslim republics as being a significant factor in accelerating the collapse of the Soviet Union. From the point of view of the United States this raises the concern about the significant and mounting social and economic costs to American society resulting from our veterans’ PTSD and IED injuries recovery. There is an unnerving passage discussing the “force multiplier” of hitting ONE tourist site which will require the protection of ALL tourist sites in the region. One sees a phenomenon starting to come into focus for Naji akin to the military-industrial complex described in Seymour Melman’s *The Permanent War Economy* in which military-related endeavors sap the economic and social vitality of a country contributing to its decay. Naji celebrates the huge financial cost of US military efforts in the Levant, calling out none other than Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and President Bush for special approbation for causing heavy US military expenses in the region.

The author has a plan for the establishment of the proto-states... “The Path for Establishing an Islamic State - Stages of the priority group (of states): The stage of “the power of vexation and exhaustion”, then the stage of “the administration of savagery”, then the stage of “the power of establishment – establishing the state”. “ (This almost reads like a State Department primer on nation-building.)<sup>3</sup> And the author is all about selecting Muslim regions for repatriation which are remote and thus relatively less accessible to Western military power. There is a chilling logic displayed in the selection of small targets interim to larger targets both to 1) skillbuild the attackers, gaining understanding of the ways and means of terrorism and territory/population management and 2) the smaller targets can be attacked with minimal expense and thus increased autonomy and independence from Islamic CHQ (presumably Al Qaeda). There is also a communication strategy with frequent reference to ‘the media’.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Naji also make multiple references to the use of spies, which is #13 and the last of the principles advanced by Sun Tzu’s *Art Of War*. There is a whole chapter on this subject! *‘Mastering the Security Dimension: Surveillance and Infiltrating Adversaries and Opponents of Every Kind’*

<sup>3</sup> *“If that stage confronts us, our role—even if we were originally striving to unite the Umma under a single banner—is to spread awareness among the classes of people of the Umma as to the importance of uniting goals and methods and exchanging loyalty because this is the way that causes the enemy to fear us, since he will not be able to isolate us and we will be able to achieve the goals we desire.”*

<sup>4</sup> There is a lengthy and parallel discussion of the role of the media in *What Is To Be Done* which at the end of the chapter on the Russian newspaper concludes with : *“In a word, the “plan for an all-Russia political newspaper”, far from representing the fruits of the labour of armchair workers, infected with dogmatism and bookishness (as it seemed to those who gave but little thought to it), is the most practical plan for immediate and all-round preparation of the uprising, with, at the same time, no loss of sight for a moment of the pressing day-to-day work”*

Naji discusses the complexities of managing savagery and advocates 'increasing rigidity' to ensure the successful societal infrastructures on behalf of the people under the purview of the Islamic State, namely food, education, and medical treatment. He goes on to describe the need for advanced management training for the management of chaos – "the textbooks are on the Internet". The qualities needed for leadership as well as need for specialized functional line management reporting to the visionary leadership is discussed. There seem to be no area of territory administration not covered by these chapters. Naji also possesses an acute sense of the role of power politics and Shari'a politics, and the nature of power, consistent with a reading on Clausewitz's *On War* (with the dictum that 'war is continuation of politics by other means'<sup>5</sup>).

Recalling the classic scene in *The Godfather* (something about making an offer they can't refuse) ...life imitates art here: *"Perhaps we find that some of them still have the same fear. Therefore, we move with them to a final stage: We understand their refusal of the first two offers; however, we will absolutely not accept hearing someday that their region is not governed by the sharia and that their administration in this situation has become exactly like the administrations of the enemies..."* Naji may have watched the movie twice and thereby developed an operational understanding of the concept of protection racketeering and the 'art' of the shakedown... In some circles this would be called 'jizya' (apostate tax...)" *In the beginning, we stressed that our battle is a battle of tawhid against unbelief and faith against polytheism and it is not an economic, political, or social battle. However, we must not forget that part of sharia politics is to address those who have weak souls among the different classes of people with the promise of reclaiming our money and our rights, or rather plundering the money of God which evil people have taken."* With an entirely straight face in the reading, Naji posits essentially that 'money is bad for your soul, so I will do you a favor and protect you and take it off your hands for you...' And the matter-of-factness with which murder is discussed is astounding..." *Note, however, that there is no forgiveness for an apostate unless he converts to Islam. When he converts, we have the option of either forgiving him or killing him because he has repented after he had the capacity to do so earlier. If that union is likely and there is no benefit to killing them, then the benefits of forgiving them are greater. That is one of the beneficial ways of polarizing them."* The prohibition against informing on Muslims is circumvented in the text in the "Spying" section of text, exonerating the act of being a stool pigeon. In the text, the concept of "Gainful employment" - prior to apocalyptic jihad - is not a valid activity. Thus a village elder who objects to jihad in the here and now in favor of temporal activities for his village – such as making a living – takes this position only at grave personal risk.

On the subject of the cathartic, ennobling, purifying qualities of combat in jihad Naji quotes Shaykh Muhammad Amin al-Misr at length. The message can be paraphrased to say that in the prior days of awe, fighters achieved (let's call it) 'nirvana' in combat and shed the bonds of Earth, ascending to the highest plane of spiritual purity. In this context one can't help but recall the words of General Eisenhower on the eve of the Normandy landings: *"You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you..."* These fighters are in an alternative reality which poses grave threats for the rest of humanity, as evidenced by this quote *"Bombs fell upon the mosque and killed all those who were in it except for a little girl who remained in the lap of her grandmother whose head had been split open and its contents dangled down in front of her granddaughter. One of the Arab mujahids began to calm the child who was raving out of fright. The mujahid was crying and one of the Afghans said to him: "What is making you cry?" The Arab said to him: "Have you no feeling? They are your people and your relatives." The Afghani said: "This is war, and you and I will die like them some day."*

The conclusion of this work calls for apocalyptic struggle, asserts that redemption will accrue to the selfless true believers who do the fighting, that jihad is worship of the highest order, and the 'fire and brimstone'

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<sup>5</sup> *"As for the fate of the movements which undertook jihad, battle, and military action and neglected politics and considered it a filthy activity of Satan, or those groups which delved into practicing non-sharia political methods and which were engrossed in infidel politics, regrettably their fate was to become a tool for the powers of unbelief and apostasy in order to pluck the fruits of jihad. Political action is very important and dangerous, such that one of them said: "A single political mistake (leads to) a result that is worse than one hundred military mistakes."*  
*Despite hyperbole in this statement, it is true to the extent that it clarifies the seriousness of a political mistake"*

section promises only scorched earth for the opposition. On the exhortation to combat, we read *"On the other hand, one is commanded to seek the tribulation and fitna of jihad and the gleaming of swords. It is an obligation until the day of resurrection and no harm comes to the soul from prolonging it."* This calls to mind the response by Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson to one of his youngest and promising subalterns on the eve of battle, who looked up and asked the great Admiral "What are your instructions to us upon the occasion of our first battle, Sir?" To which the patrician, venerated Admiral looked down upon the young officer, put his arm upon his shoulder and responded "Steer for the nearest enemy man o' war, and put the mouths of our cannons as close to his waterline as we can get... I shall fault no commander who lays his vessel alongside a ship of the enemy." The extended conclusion to *MOS* offers repeated sanctifications to God, faith that strength and courage will find its way to the fighters in the apocalyptic battles to follow<sup>6</sup>, and expresses laments by martyred fighters who are quoted to the effect that "they regret that they have but one life to give..." (Nathan Hale, upon his hanging, 1776).

As it is said *"News of miracles like these, and the attack on New York and Washington before them, and the miracles which occurred between the two, now enters every home of the unbelievers. There is no house of clay or tent which it does not enter, which smooths the way, by the permission of God, for a stage that is separate from the stages of the jihad of the believers at the present time."* To that effect, this week the Senate Armed Services Committee heard status and assessments of Islamic State threats to the homeland. There was disagreement among the subject matter experts regarding the likelihood of a Paris-style attack as compared to home-grown terrorist attacks on the order of the Chattanooga and San Bernardino attacks. Still, the very fact that these hearings are being held is testimony to the pervasive threat and changes to our way of life. Carpet bombing is clearly not the answer. Colin Powell on NBC 'Meet the Press 9/6/15: *"ISIS is not just an enemy waiting to be defeated in Syria and in Iraq and elsewhere. It is a movement. It is not something that's going to lend itself to immediate military power to take it out. It's a movement. And it's going to have to be defeated by the people who live in the areas where this movement exists."*<sup>7</sup>

The Islamic State is a "renewable resource" from two perspectives: leaders who are neutralized regenerate with new names and with new IS leadership stepping in to take their place; and 2) the impressionability and idealism of youth - combined with a search of 'meaning' is an immutable human condition. Neutralization of Islamic State leadership by whatever means is warranted and helpful in three ways: the administration of justice, the loss of the experienced leaders who have the know-how to achieve their ends and organize attacks, and for whatever deterrent effect is provided towards assuming leadership (which might result in the possibility or likelihood of meeting the same end). Nevertheless, we are facing an endless fresh supply of adherents through the effective use of internet recruiting. The pride, euphoria, audacity and savagery of IS has fired the souls of young Sunni Muslims all over the world who view themselves as victims from all angles and who believe that IS can wipe out the transgressors and usurpers, and then remake the world in original uncorrupted Sha'ria. And for youthful non-Muslims, social alienation, discontent, economic uncertainty and hardships, and a search for 'adventure' also attract non-Muslims to the sense of connection and 'brotherhood' offered by the Islamic State. Prospective IS recruits view these IS websites, where they become vulnerable to predation by Islamic State recruiters. We are in this for the long haul. The Islamic State is a creative, committed, implacable enemy and consciously or not, IS uses plays from these classic playbooks - which is worrisome because there is a long history of success for those who employ these strategies. Naji promised an apocalyptic struggle in 2004 in this treatise *Management of Savagery*<sup>8</sup>; IS savagery and attacks on Western targets and in the Levant since that time have been increasing in intensity and frequency, and are consistent with the strategies in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, Carl Von Clausewitz's *On War*, Lenin's *What Is To Be Done ...* and occasionally, Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*. There is not a shred of doubt that should WMD ever be available to them, IS will use them. Thus we need to continue to neutralize IS leadership, fight fire with fire, reduce IS infrastructure wherever we find it, and *continue to step up our response*. Because we've read those books *TOO!*

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<sup>6</sup> Round Two, similar to General Eisenhower's Order of the Day to Allied armed forces on the eve of D-Day landings in Normandy "Let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."

<sup>7</sup> <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/air-power-can-only-do-so-much-in-isis-fight>

<sup>8</sup> <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>